

San Antonio Writing Project

Volume 1, Issue 9

June 18, 2007 (Day 9)

Today's Tangents

We discovered that faculty members have to pay \$500 a year to park – that is absurd!

Lennie, picking up on a comment someone had made, asked what are some unethical requests we have received from administrators. Some of the responses were: change grades, make test scores disappear, trying to embarrass teachers by being called out and yelled at in public for not complying with a decision, try to force through ARDs and LPACS without parents, intimidate you into complying with an ARD decision you didn't agree with, keeping parents out of the loop, putting a kid in SE right before TAKS.

How about our Spurs!

Bob said that his first grandchild is expected today.

The Power That Be Attempt to Create Havoc

Last week, TPTB packed up all of our SAWP materials from the room and closet and took everything off the walls. All of these things were packed on carts and Kim was forced to spend her day off moving our belongings.

This morning, we had to retrieve everything from Roxanne's office and set up again and it seemed we would have to put everything away each day (which makes her office unusable). Roxanne has been investigating since Friday to find out what the what, and she is really upset and disheartened.

Also, several people commented that they had had tough weekends.

In other news, this is our third week here at SAWP. It sure doesn't seem like it.

Katherine brought us a Swiftian article on gas prices. She also continues to talk to her new laptop. Nora asked her to read her article to the group.

Aurelia deSilva was here with us this morning.

We didn't revisit the knotted string

Journals

Kim – Her theme was that some things cannot be retrieved (inspired by a comment from Kalpana. She used cherries going bad as a metaphor for the moments of life. People really responded to Kim's

word choice

Rueben commented that there are "no good writers, only good rewriters" and he finds it hard to achieve the exact language as Kim and Sheryll do when journal writing. He was curious about their revising strategies

Roxanne wrote about how she was really upset about what happened to our room, to the point where it has made her sick. She worried all weekend. She is really angry about the way our pictures were treated

Fortunately, by the end of the day the issue was resolved and the Dean has been invited to have lunch with us on Thursday.

Demo Lesson: Teaching Integrated Reading and Language Arts through the Use of Themes by Sheryll Putnam

A Survival Kit for the Special Education Teacher – Roger Pierangelo, PhD, Sheryll recommends for all teachers who have special education students.

A SE classroom teacher must be able to modify at moment's notice, manage social need of wide variety of needs abilities, keep cool and apply strict and immediate behavior modifications and

discipline.

The students are young yet cynical – you must fake it till you make it with them.

Paperwork and documentation – a huge issue, legal implications, behavior

documentation (restraint, possibility of injury to teacher and/or child)

Overidentification of boys in SE, especially at grade 3 or higher; girls are quieter and slide by less detected, boys tend to act

Themes cont.

out because they are struggling academically

“The interventionist”

Sheryll advocates for SE children receiving an education, not wasting their time coloring. SE and General Ed teachers need to communicate. That is the bottom line.

Use of themes allows her to specifically modify tasks in order to maximize participation and creating a sense of community among students with diverse abilities.

Resource students can often think outside the box, often it isn't an issue of intelligence – it's the gap between intelligence and performance, mods can be as simple as having

peers work together.

People had a lot of questions about nuts and bolts of SE, but each campus and/or district is different so ...

Katherine sees a lot of ill will between the SE and GE teachers.

Sheryll replied we (teachers) don't communicate well and have bad people skills. Few people understand the law which also causes problems.

Jennifer said that administrators make bad decisions that create bad feelings between SE and GE

Joni said that kids who have a low IQ but don't qualify for services is “Letting the child twist in the

wind.”

Kids not exposed to literacy prior to school, no real conversations at home, test so low because of this that IQ shows up low, they get referred but DNQ, so we 504 these kids (“a bandaid”), standardized testing forces us to speed up when some kids don't learn that way. Mods are meant to level the playing field

Erlinda had a question about the paperwork, specifically At Risk red folders. Isn't this often just documentation and nothing is really done?

Sheryll replied, “Sometimes.”

Writing for a purpose

Lennie: Is there computer literacy/gaming among your students?

Sheryll: My students don't have access at home and are often economically disadvantaged. The majority have less than 10 books/magazines at home and no computers at home.

Lennie: Going online with this is exciting for them then?

Sheryll: Yes. The internet is more exciting to them than TV. TV tells

you what it wants you to know. Internet is all about investigation and letting kids follow their interests.

Theme: Rainforests

6 weeks of research and hands on activities related to theme:

KLRN videos

Online reading and books for research – she directs them to

particular websites to guide research

Creative stories (morbidly allowed) and art activities

Maps and subject webbing

Murals

Daily reading (levels K-4)

Journaling

Daily: reading, writing, art

“I'm not going to abandon you. I will hold your hand until you can do it by yourself.” - Sheryll

The School Community

Kids wrote letters about threats to rainforest and got some responses back. They also staged a rally with posters in the hallway, sang some songs, got positive attention at the school

Sample Lessons

Activity 1— find facts and paraphrase them; contribute to classroom canopy by drawing a leaf and

writing the fact on it.

Activity 2 – read about an animal, write a one paragraph description, and create a book page for that animal.

Reactions

People shared their work.

People liked the hands on aspects and the art tie ins in the lessons, saying that this will make kids

more interested. Also, they liked the real world connections.

Last Word

Nancy said, “It bothers me to hear teachers say that they didn't become a general ed teacher to teach special ed kids. That attitude is immoral. We are here to teach all kids. If a teacher is mad at the system, don't take it out on the kids.”